

The Longest Journey

PASSAGE · NON-FICTION

SKILLS TRAINED

Working memory

Delayed recall

Inference

HOW TO USE THIS SHEET

About 15 minutes

- 1 Read the passage twice, slowly. Take about four minutes.
- 2 Turn to the next page and cover this one. No looking back.
- 3 Write what you remember, then mark it on the last page.

The Arctic tern is a small white seabird. It weighs about as much as an apple. It also makes the longest journey of any animal on Earth.

Each year it flies from the Arctic, in the far north, all the way to Antarctica, in the far south. Then it turns round and flies back. That is a round trip of roughly seventy thousand kilometres.

It does not fly in a straight line. A straight line would be shorter, but terns follow the wind instead. They swing out over the Atlantic in a great curving shape, letting the weather push them along. The longer route is the easier one.

Terns live a long time. Thirty years is common. Added up, one bird may fly far enough in its life to reach the moon and come back three times.

Scientists only worked out the route recently. The birds were too small to carry the heavy trackers used on larger animals. Then someone built a tracker weighing just over one gram, light enough to clip to a tern's leg.

The first results surprised everybody. The birds were travelling much further than anyone had guessed.

Cover the passage before you start.

Looking back turns this into a copying exercise. Getting it slightly wrong from memory is what makes it work.

PART A Tell it back

Write down everything you can remember about the Arctic tern and its journey.

PART B 4 questions

1 How much does an Arctic tern weigh, roughly?

2 Which two places does it fly between each year?

3 Why do terns not fly in a straight line?

4 Why did it take scientists so long to find out where the terns go?

PART C Mark your own work

Now go back to the passage. Tick every answer you got right. You do not need the same words as the answer below — if you wrote the same idea in your own words, it counts.

- ☐ 1 • About as much as an apple.
- ☐ 2 • The Arctic in the far north and Antarctica in the far south.
- ☐ 3 • They follow the wind. The longer curving route lets the weather push them along, so it is easier.
- ☐ 4 • The birds were too small and light to carry the trackers that existed. Scientists had to wait until someone built one light enough — just over a gram.

FACTS RECALLED IN PART A

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QUESTIONS CORRECT

— / 4

DATE

THE STRATEGY Link it to something you know

Tie a new fact to one already in your head. A tern weighs about as much as an apple; a tern's life adds up to three trips to the moon. Facts hooked onto something familiar are far easier to find again later.

WHERE YOU ALREADY DO THIS

When you need to remember a number, do you ever compare it to something you already know?

FOR THE PARENT OR TEACHER · This sheet trains recall, not reading speed. Do not prompt during Part A, and do not let them look back. Question 4 asks your child to work something out rather than remember it, so a thoughtful wrong answer there is worth more than a lucky right one — talk it through together afterwards.